

## **VB/I-70 2019 CIP and 5YR Update Community Interview Questions**

**April 2019**

*In April 2019, EPA representatives Jennifer Chergo and Jesse Aviles conducted 15 interviews with a spectrum of interested parties regarding the VB/I-70 Superfund Site. Interviewees included local government officials, city council staff, representatives from the local business community, area non-profits, and neighborhood organizations, residents from the neighborhoods within the site boundaries, Community Advisory Group members, and other interested individuals. Representatives from Skeo Solutions, EPA's contractor, attended many of the meetings and took notes. Below are the questions that were asked and a summary of the responses received from Jennifer Chergo's notes. Jesse Aviles submitted response summaries from his notes separately to Skeo. Together with Skeo's notes, a full response summary will be included in the Five Year Review and Community Involvement Plan.*

### **1. What neighborhood do you live in and when did you move to the area?**

*Two interviewees had lived in a VB/I-70 neighborhood during the bulk of the residential investigation and cleanup (1998-2008). Three interviewees had moved to a VB/I-70 neighborhood more recently, in 2014 or 2015. One has lived in an adjacent neighborhood for the past ten years or so. Six interviewees live outside the area, but work in the VB/I-70 site boundaries. Three interviewees live outside of the area.*

### **2. Why are you interested in the VB/I-70 Superfund Site?**

The majority of the interviewees stated they were interested in the Superfund site due to concerns about the health of area residents. For some, there was a personal motive stemming from health problems in their immediate family and wondering if those health problems could be attributed to environmental contamination. Others had more general concerns for the health of their neighbors or for the people they work with who work and live in the area. One noted that the nature of his work is to provide medical care and health and wellness services to the community. A couple felt a strong sense of responsibility to know what is happening in their community as they had lived or worked in the affected neighborhoods for decades.

Some said they were interested because they felt it was important to be active and involved in their communities. One mentioned that she was interested in all Superfund Sites. She and other interviewees as well said they were interested in helping to educate the community, be a liason, about potential health and environmental risks.

A couple of interviewees were also concerned with the environment, broadly and specifically. One was interested in risks from the site with regard to backyard gardening, and another felt that the Superfund process of cleaning up the site contaminants was a baseline to rehabilitate the ecology of the entire area.

Some interviewees said that they got involved in the Superfund Site after first activating around the expansion of I-70 and the City and County of Denver's Platte to Park Hill Project.

**3. Are you aware of the former environmental issues at the VB/I-70 site and the cleanup activities that have taken place to date?**

*Every interviewee responded yes.*

**4. Are you aware that EPA has proposed to delist the residential soils portion (Operable Unit 1) of the site from the National Priorities List?**

*Every interviewee responded yes. One said that EPA should have explained better why the deletion was necessary. Another said that EPA should have updated its Community Involvement Plan prior to the proposal to delete. And another noted that some people feel the delisting is being done to facilitate the City's desire to redevelop the area.*

**5. Was your property sampled during investigations and the residential soil cleanup actions?**

*Five interviewees had at least one property that was sampled. Three of those properties required a soil replacement.*

**6. In your opinion, what were the effects of the residential soil cleanup on the community?**

*Opinions varied among interviewees in response to this question. They are broken down here into mostly positive or mostly negative effects on the community:*

*Mostly positive comments included that the investigation and cleanup seemed to be thorough and was majorly beneficial to the community. Another interviewee supported that point by saying it was very beneficial effect because there was so much sampling at so many properties, which remediated the risk. One person noted that there is a general sense that people in the community are glad the cleanup happened. Another said that people are more confident that they can use their property for gardening and children can now play safely. A few interviewees said that they know that historically a lot of people in the community were interested in the cleanup, and a lot of people were happy about it. They felt that the Community Health Program was very positive. One person noted that they thought the investigation and cleanup was reactive, seemed a bit late, but it was fortunate that it happened.*

*Mostly negative comments included that a lot of people in the community didn't and don't know about it. One interviewee noted that the idea of contaminated soils had a traumatizing effect on the community that persists today. Some interviewees noted that they were not involved with the Superfund Site during the investigation and cleanup, but they feel the community didn't, and still doesn't, trust EPA. They said that they felt the community was left with a lot of questions about effectiveness of the cleanup, other contaminants, the source of pollution and whether EPA chose the right remedy. One interviewee noted that at properties where EPA conducted a soil cleanup and replacement, people had trouble growing plants and grass; the replacement soil was subpar; remediation should not only remove danger, but attain similar or improved conditions.*

a. Do you think EPA did a good job explaining risks during the cleanup?

*About one half of the interviewees felt that EPA did a good job explaining risks during the cleanup. A couple of people noted that it is always extremely difficult for everyone everywhere to explain risk accurately and simply. One person complimented the site's "complicated but thorough" risk assessment. Another mentioned that a 2005 Community Involvement Plan documented that EPA put a lot of effort into communicating risk and site activities to the community.*

*Another half of the interviewees said that they were not around during the investigation and cleanup and most therefore did not have an opinion. One said that since her involvement more recently, EPA and the City and County of Denver could have done more to inform the public about current site activities by advertising meetings more widely, etc...*

b. Can you think of anything EPA could have done during the residential soil cleanup to better communicate the risks?

*Many interviewees thought EPA communicated the risk as well as possible at the time. Most of the responses had to do with current risk communication. One said that there is a gap of knowledge on how the investigation and sampling addressed areas not sampled. People need to fully understand the problem. There should be better communication about why we know that testing accomplished what we needed to know. One person felt that EPA should better communicate that the public safety goal is individual health. One interviewee said that there was and still is uncertainty about the cleanliness of the soil. Another mentioned that there was and is mistrust between the community and EPA, so people do not hear the truth or the information. One person told EPA to guard against statements that say there is not risk left - there is always risk.*

7. Have you ever received any communication from local, state or other federal agency officials about the cleanup, and/or restrictions (ICs) at the site?

*Most responded yes. A few people said no and that they received their information by digging around for it or through the Community Advisory Group.*

8. How do you learn about what's happening at the site now?

*Most said they learn what's happening from agency emails, followed by going to the EPA website. Some said they get information from the CAG and by doing research on their own, particularly using primary source documents. A few said they get most of their information about the site from agency representatives and from meetings, though one person mentioned that CAG meetings are alarming. Press releases, flyers, the City website, physically observing the site, and the library all got one mention each.*

9. What type of information do you feel that you need or want regarding the VB/I-70 Superfund Site?

**Information organization/location:** *A few people said they were getting the information they needed now, mainly from the EPA website. One said she had the information she needed now, but that she had had to dig for it. Another affirmed that the site information seemed hard to find and suggested it should be more centralized and easier to digest. Another said that providing more timely information to the library repository would be helpful.*

**OU2** - *A number of those interviewed said they were interested at this point and going forward in Operable Unit 2 – liner information, next steps, future plans, any construction/development plans.*

**OU1** - *Many were interested in information affecting individual residential property owners in OU1 (When will OU1 be delisted, with clear answers as to why OU1 should be delisted and what were the standards and goals for delisting and how we met them? How to access property sampling and cleanup information? How are new residents informed of their yard status? Can property information be available on Website in plain language?).*

**Process/Timeline:** *One interviewee said it would be helpful to know what the community's entry points to the process were, while another said a site timeline would be helpful.*

**Overall Content:** *One person said some kind of contrast sheet showing before and after and how EPA has met its goals along the way would be helpful. Another said he wanted to see raw data whenever available. A couple of people said they wanted any updates about site activity. One said it would be nice to get information that builds a base of knowledge about the site.*

*One person was interested in receiving the Five Year Review Report when finished. Another would like a contact sheet with contacts for other agencies and contacts working in the area on non-Superfund/EPA related activities.*

10. Who would you contact if you have questions or concerns, or need information about the site?

Almost all responded that they would contact EPA – Jennifer Chergo or Jesse Aviles with questions or for information about the site. A couple of people said they would also contact CDPHE, and a couple mentioned the City and County of Denver. The EPA Website and the EPA general information number were also mentioned.

**11. What is the best way to keep the community informed about activities at the VB/I-70 Superfund Site?**

All respondents agreed that there is no local newspaper currently serving the neighborhoods in the VB/I-70 Superfund Site. Many said that using existing resources would work well. This might include placing information in the form of flyers or going in person to community meetings or events and talking one-on-one at existing community locations would work well. People mentioned the Growhaus, Focus Points Family Resource Center, recreation centers, the Cole Neighborhood Association and other neighborhood organizations, Energy Outreach Colorado, and El Comercial (a Spanish newspaper but it's not just local).

Many respondents said the EPA website is a good source of information for the community, as are emails from EPA and from the CAG. One person also mentioned the GES Coalition Website.

One interviewee said that direct mailings to residents works well, and a couple of people mentioned flyer door-to-door works well.

Other suggestions included Brother Jeff's paper, social media generally, the library for those without internet access, and quarterly meetings or meetings as needed. One person said that the city health department should be taking the lead on distributing bulletins, in partnership with EPA. For businesses, one interviewee said he provides updates to workers, and another suggested EPA produce fact sheets for businesses in and near OU2 as we go through the RI/FS stage.

**12. Where do you get local news information? Local television, radio stations, newspapers, the internet?**

*Responses are as follows, with the number of mentions following each:*

*Denver Post online – 3*

*Denverite – 3*

*Denver Post – 2*

*Facebook – 2*

*Colorado Sun online – 1*

*Colorado Public Radio – 1*

*Colorado Public Radio online – 1*

*Telemundo – 1*

*Univision – 1*

*Social media (general) – 1*

*Next Door – 1*

*Local TV News – 1*

*Area RNOs – 1*  
*El Semanario – 1*  
*El Comercial – 1*  
*Word of Mouth -1*  
*Texting Links with Media Articles - 1*

**13. Do you currently have any concerns about potential risks from the site?**

Five of those interviewed said they do not have any concerns about potential risks from the site. One added that if there is a problem, there are mechanisms in place to address it.

The majority of the other concerns expressed had to do with potential risks at commercial/industrial properties and areas now being redeveloped. A number of people were concerned that EPA did not adequately investigate residential yards in OU1, particularly because EPA did not conclusively identify the source of the contamination. They are concerned that there may still be contaminants at commercial properties and at depth as some residential properties, and that those contaminants are being released via recent redevelopment activities. They are concerned that yards may not have been investigated or cleaned up sufficiently. They would like to know what the risk is where crews are digging in the area for the I-70 expansion and at OU2. They would like to know if EPA is monitoring conditions during all of this construction activity in and near the site. One said that EPA should not delete OU1 until further testing is done.

A couple of interviewees did have some concerns about potential risks at OU2 as well, and would like information about what remedy will be required for redevelopment at OU2 and what contaminants might be being released into the river?

**14. Are you aware of any community concerns regarding the site or its operation and administration?**

Most interviewees felt that EPA was already aware of the main community concerns because most had been expressed before many times at CAG meetings and EPA meetings and elsewhere over the past year or two. Some said the concerns they hear of are from the CAG, not necessarily from the community at large or people who work in the site. They said that those concerns mainly have to do with health concerns from potential contamination that they feel was not sufficiently addressed by the cleanup; future and current development in the site and the potential contamination being released; questions about soils and groundwater contamination at OU2; and I-70 construction through the site and the possible contaminants being dug into and released. One interviewee said that there is concern among some in the community because they don't know if they are affected by soils contamination or not. A couple of people said that community concerns aren't necessarily about only the Superfund site, but more about general environmental issues in the area such as the refinery and I-70 expansion dust and construction, and one interviewee said he has noticed an increase in environmental concerns generally in the past few years.

**15. Can you suggest other community members who would be interested in talking with us about the site?**

EPA received the names and contacts of a number of people and organizations not previously contacted for these interviews. EPA will add these contacts to our mailing and contact list for current and future outreach efforts.

**16. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Responses here were varied. The responses are listed here, broken into general categories:

**OU1:**

EPA should have looked at the source of the contamination for OU1. There is a much better argument that the contaminated soils came from fill.

The OU1 remedy was not adequate. It is not a permanent solution because there is likely contamination left at depth.

How does EPA monitor if contaminated soil is coming up to the surface from below over time?

It would be useful to know what triggers the City to review development permits for possible environmental concerns at VB/I-70.

**OU2:**

**Process / Communication:**

A 5YR should question the assumptions that went into the Record of Decision and remedy.

The community appreciates the work that EPA has done to clean up contamination in these neighborhoods.

There needs to be more partnership between EPA and the community.

The VB/I-70 Superfund Site process is bad because EPA is always telling the community that their concerns are not EPA's responsibility.

There is a need for close coordination between the City and EPA at OU2 and maybe OU3 because of potential likely development.

Continue the free flow of information that is well supported by data that can be viewed as factual and trustworthy.

How do we create a knowledge base in the community to build on?

It's important to recognize the work that EPA did. We commend EPA on that work. The site was well studied and the remedy is protective.

**Extra Questions for Local Officials only:**

- A. Are you aware of any changes to state laws or local regulations that might affect the protectiveness of the site's remedy?**

No, though there might be a new law on underground utilities.

- B. Are you aware of any changes in projected land uses at the site?**

OU2 will be redeveloped. The Coliseum area may become at least partly residential. The National Western Complex will be expanded to include commercial properties/ uses.